

R E P L Y

TO

I R W I N:

&c. &c. &c.

[Price One Shilling and Sixpence.]

1853-54

1853-54

1853-54

1853-54

1853-54

1853-54

1853-54

SU

583. 7283
4

R E P L Y

TO

I R W I N:

OR,

THE FEASIBILITY OF
BUONAPARTE's
SUPPOSED EXPEDITION TO THE EAST,
EXEMPLIFIED.

BY AN OFFICER
IN THE SERVICE OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.

" 1st Citizen. I will hear Brutus speak.

" 2^d Citizen. I will hear Cassius speak, and compare their
reasons."

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL JUN. AND W. DAVIES
IN THE STRAND.

1798.

R E P L Y

TO

I R W I W

OF

THE FEASIBILITY OF

BUONAPARTE'S

SUPPOSED EXPEDITION TO THE EAST

EXAMINED.

BY AN OFFICER

OF THE SERVICE OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY.

"I have been thinking of you for some time, and I am glad to hear that you are well. I am well, and hope to be so for some time longer."

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL JUN. AND W. DAVIES
IN THE Strand,

1798.

TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE BOARD OF CONTROUL,
THE HONOURABLE
EAST INDIA COMPANY,
AND
THE PUBLIC AT LARGE;
THE FOLLOWING REMARKS
ARE DEDICATED,
BY
THEIR DEVOTED
HUMBLE SERVANT,
THE AUTHOR.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE BOARD OF CONTROLS

THE HONOURABLE
EAST INDIA COMPANY

AND
THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS

ARE Elected

THEIR NAMES

ARE HEREBY

THE AUTHOR

U
w
h
p
h
in
at
fr
ha
sh
th
ler
pr
th
by
on

ADVERTISEMENT.

UNACCUSTOMED to write for the public eye, the Author of these few pages would feel a want of confidence to intrude himself upon their notice, were he not impressed with hope, that the motives which have impelled him to take up the pen will influence them to pardon the temerity of the attempt. Every day produces events which, from their apparent improbability, would have excited ridicule on the person who should have predicted them an hour before they happened. The infuriate and unrelenting foe, despairing of making any impression upon the fabric itself, has conceived the subtle idea of producing its downfall, by tearing away its chief supporters with one concerted shock. The two main pillars of
our

our empire, the East and West Indies, about to be attacked at the same moment *, may produce a concussion that will require our utmost vigour to withstand: let us then be prepared for the event, and let those who have the watch be zealously vigilant in their duty; for although we may be favoured with a prosperous gale, still, if the helmsman slumber over the wheel, the ship may broach-to, and the consequences prove fatal. Whatever may be the issue of an enterprise which fills the world with astonishment, and involves perhaps the fate of nations in Europe as well as Asia, the Author will at least possess the consoling reflection of having offered his humble admonitions towards the prosperity and welfare of the country to which his professional services have been long devoted.

* It seems now generally believed, that the armament which lately sailed from France is destined for the West Indies; and the last Paris papers announce the sailing of a squadron to that quarter.

October 18th, 1798.

REPLY

R E P L Y

TO

I R W I N;

&c. &c. &c.

THE late glorious victory obtained by our gallant fleet, under the heroic Nelson, off the mouth of the Nile, has had the effect of dispelling the alarm which existed in the public mind for the consequences of Buonaparte's supposed expedition against the British possessions in Asia; and Mr. Irwin's pamphlet has perhaps contributed to confirm the delusion.

Actuated solely by a zeal in the cause of our country, in throwing together the following observations, I trust I shall not incur the imputation of being desirous to damp the universal joy that has been excited by the late glorious victory, or to depreciate

B

the

the merits of our immortal tars, by whom it was achieved. Bred up myself to the profession of arms, I most sincerely sympathise with them all in the feelings of exulting pride, by which every breast must be inspired ; and heartily attached as I am to my country, its constitution, and government, it is only with a view to encourage a necessary degree of attention to its prosperity and welfare that I have been induced to take up my pen.

Delusion, then, may we not with reason call that state of mind which ascribes to the consequences of our late victory, and the reported deleterious effects of the climate of Egypt, the annihilation of Buonaparte and his army ? For if, as I trust it will be admitted, the continuance of the French fleet in the Mediterranean could not have accelerated or co-operated in the measure of pushing forward a division of the army to the coasts of the Red Sea from Grand Cairo, how, it may be asked, can the defeat of that fleet frustrate such an enterprise ? Neither could its continuance on the southern coast of Egypt have aided their embarkation at,
and

and progress from, Suez. It certainly might have operated to keep the natives in awe immediately on the coasts where it shewed itself, but it is not likely to have deterred the inhabitants of the interior from opposing the French army, provided they were disposed to do so.

The inference then that I would draw, with respect to the effect of this victory on Buonaparte's expedition is, (provided it be a part of his plan to get to India,) that the situation of the French army, rendered more desperate by the intercourse with the mother country being interrupted, the General may feel the necessity of hazarding every thing in a prompt attempt to reach the shores of Asia by a coup de main, which in every respect is the most likely, and perhaps the only plan by which he can hope for success to his views: for if he delays until the British governments of India are perfectly prepared for his arrival, the valour of the armies in that country, (which, though but poorly appreciated in Great Britain, needs not the testimony of my humble pen to hand its achievements

ments down to posterity amongst the foremost ranks of British heroism and glory,) and the necessary augmentation that will, it is presumed, take place in the establishments there, to receive with all due attention such a magnanimous visitor, will in all probability produce the effect of blasting, in the tropical regions of Asia, all those laurels which he plucked from the more genial soil of Italy.

The natural and other difficulties, predicted as terrific obstacles to the progress of the French army to Cairo, have all been surmounted with a spirit of enterprise and celerity that has seldom been exceeded.

The debarkation of an army of more than 22,000 fighting men, with all their necessary train of followers, baggage, stores, guns, &c. &c. has been effected in a foreign country, the important posts of Alexandria, Rosetta, and Damietta taken by assault, garrisons established in those places, the civil government of them in some measure organised and confirmed; and the capital of Egypt, containing upwards of 400,000 inhabitants, has been triumphantly

antly taken possession of by an invading army, in nearly as short a space of time as would be required by any body of troops, under the coincidence of every favourable circumstance, for the performance of a march over the same extent of country in the common course of military movements. And we are further informed by the public accounts, that a division of the French army was actually sent forward to Suez soon after the arrival of Buonaparte at Cairo.

Distant from the scene of action, and the effects of it not yet felt in Europe, this brilliant achievement has been received in this country with indifference and contempt: and perhaps the admiration and astonishment, which a view of the enterprise excites, has been in general withheld, from an aversion to bestow praise on an enemy; or possibly the exploit has only claimed transitory notice in the public mind, because it is said to have been attended with the loss of many men in action, as well as many more from sickness;

sickness; whence the consequences have been considered unavailing to the enemy.

I am not disposed to offer a false glare of praise on the abilities of an enemy; neither do I altogether withhold my belief in those accounts, which detail to us the destruction of numbers of the French army by the hostility of the natives and the effects of the climate. For, admitting the veracity of these statements, every person who has ever served with an army in the field, and especially in foreign countries, will recognise nothing more in these accounts than those casualties to which troops on service are every where liable, and for which the mind and the resources of the French General, we must be inclined to suppose, were previously prepared. It is said Buonaparte has been disappointed, in meeting with an hostile, instead of a cordial, reception. I should rather think such statements to have their foundation in the patriotic conjectures of newspaper editors than any positive proof. Of the distracted government
of

of Egypt, and the feuds and animosities that constantly exist between the Pacha, on the part of the Turkish government, and the different Beys, we have a variety of evidence; and so little is the power of the Pacha or Turkish viceroy held in any respect, that (as we are informed by Mr. Savary) whenever any party of the Beys are displeased with him, they send a messenger to him, who only pronounces the words *Inzil Pacha*, and he is obliged to fly for safety; nor has the Porte for many years ever attempted to renovate this merely nominal sovereignty. That some hostilities must have been expected by Buonaparte, is evident from the nature of circumstances, as well as from the late message of the Executive Directory of France, in which the punishment of the Beys is an avowed object. That *they* would be disposed to maintain themselves in their despotic and arbitrary dominion, we cannot for a moment doubt: but the regular force kept up under their authority is said to consist only of 8000 men; and how far the

mass of inhabitants may be inclined to aid their tyrannic rulers seems at least highly problematical. Much stress has been laid upon the aversion of Mahomedans against Christians; but religious bigotry and fanaticism is not, perhaps, amongst the strongest passions which influence mankind in the present age; and it is probable a spirit of revenge, for the accumulated injuries of their oppressors, may encourage the inhabitants to forego less violent impressions in order to gratify that passion. Besides, that division of the inhabitants of Egypt called Copts, which may form one third of its population, are said to profess Christianity; and would, doubtless, embrace any opportunity that might fairly present itself, to resent those indignities and injuries which are universally exercised towards them, even to the extent of open hostility between villages, towns, and districts, on the part of the more numerous class of Mahomedan inhabitants.

Savary, in his Letters on Egypt, very feelingly describes the discordant state of
the

the government of that country, and its direful effects on the devoted inhabitants.

“Agriculture,” says he, “decayed, canals dry, arbitrary taxes raised, people of worth plundered and massacred, robbers in every office, war, pestilence, and famine, together with the fatal effects of discord among the chiefs,” &c.

Can we then reasonably doubt of the avidity with which people, so miserably situated, would embrace any change that might be offered to them? Plunged into the deepest abyss of oppression and despair, they would naturally rejoice at the prospect of a change, from feelings incident to such a state of debasement, which forcibly suggest that, arrived at the utmost pitch of human misery, any change must be for the better.

With respect to the reported effect of the waters of the Nile on Buonaparte's army, it must recur to the recollection of every man who has ever traversed foreign countries, either as a traveller or with armies, that the necessity of using various kinds of

water is generally more or less productive of temporary disorder in the human frame: and it may readily be conceived that the state of fermentation in which those of the Nile must have been when the French army had first occasion to use them, may have had that effect, owing to the then recent flowing of that water, which, in common with the periodical rise of all great rivers, must precipitate along with the torrents which are poured down from the adjacent mountains, and, flowing over an extensive space of variegated soil, an enormous quantity of muddy particles, that may render the waters unwholesome, until time shall have allowed them to subside, or a very simple process of artificial means be used for the purpose, which, in all stationary positions, every individual can practise with facility. That the waters of the Nile are not specifically unwholesome, we possess pretty positive proof, from the testimony of the writer before mentioned, M. Savary,—who, in his Letters on Egypt, says, “The waters of the Nile are lighter, softer, and more agreeable to
“ the

“ the taste than any I know ; greatly in-
 “ fluence the health of the inhabitants : all
 “ antiquity acknowledges their excellence,
 “ and the people drink them with avidity,
 “ without any injury from the quan-
 “ tity,” &c.

Although the road between Alexandria and Cairo may be infested by robbers and plundering Arabs, which renders the communication dangerous to individuals or straggling parties, as is at all times the case in that and every other country where no regular police or administration of justice prevails ; a garrison of 5000 men at Alexandria, joined to the mutual co-operation of the posts established at Rosetta and Damietta, may, I think, without the hazard of contradiction, be pronounced as perfectly adequate to keep open the communication with Grand Cairo, and in concert with the troops at head-quarters insure the safe arrival of every convoy and supply that it may be necessary to draw from the Delta : and the works of Alexandria, being put in a state of defence, will be a sufficient security against

any attempts of the natives, and enable the French to make any detachments that may be necessary for the above purposes.

The situation of the French army has been declared to be desperate, from the circumstance of the General having strengthened the fortifications, and thrown up lines of intrenchment in particular positions which, of course, he deems it necessary to occupy. But I confess in these measures I can only discover a system of common prudence and necessary arrangement, which it would behove every man to do in a similar situation where a foreign army is introduced, to establish itself either for the purposes of further military operation or permanent conquest; the neglect of such precautions would have been the extreme of folly, rashness, and ignorance.

Of the fate of Louis the IXth, of France, and the army with which he landed in Egypt in the 13th century, we may all be informed; and Mr. Irwin, in his Pamphlet, introduces it as an argument from which similar inferences may be drawn of the result of the expedition under Buonaparte.

But

But with all the candour and impartiality that I have prescribed to myself in the consideration of this subject, I confess I am at a loss to discover any striking comparison or similarity of circumstances to warrant such a conclusion,

At the time of the invasion of Egypt by the King of France, that country was governed by Nejim Ud-deen, a Prince famous in the annals of his time.—Learned in the art of war, in which he had derived great confidence from his successful opposition against the hosts of European warriors who invaded his dominions during the Crusades; and who had the peculiar happiness to unite in his own character the wisdom and energy of a statesman, with the prudence and valour of a true soldier. From such a leader, at the head of a numerous and well-trained army, long inured to victory, and still burning with the spirit of religious enthusiasm, excited by the Crusaders against all Christians, a very different sort of opposition was to be encountered from that which the most sanguine may imagine, on the

the part of the present discordant rulers of that country, possessing but a very insignificant number of forces, and those enervated and debauched by the practice of every species of unbridled profligacy and licentious rapacity. Besides which, the project of Louis the IXth failed from two other very material causes; from the example of which we may at least be inclined to allow Buonaparte prudence enough to take warning, and avoid those errors which proved fatal to his predecessor in the same gigantic career. The first was an unpardonable obstinacy engendered by ignorance, which led the engineers of the French King's army to persevere in an ill-judged plan of forming a mound in the Canal of Achmoun, in which work they were constantly foiled by the Egyptian troops; yet rather than give up a plan once adopted, and try some new expedient, they perversely persevered in their error; during which their army was harassed and diminished by the enemy, who, benefiting of the delay, concentrated their numerous forces from the distant posts of the kingdom.

The

The Greek fire, a species of destruction used in those days, and from which the French army sustained incredible mischief, is not known, I fancy, to the dissolute Bashaws of the present day. And in the second instance, when, by a desperate attempt, a part of the French army forded the canal, instead of waiting with common prudence to enable the army to act in union; the rashness of the Cavaliers and Templars, excited partly by a jealousy of prowess and glory between different descriptions of warriors, made them rush forward, and by the promptness of their movements they entered the city of Mansoura; but they were soon made sensible of the irretrievable injury which they occasioned, for the enemy finding them unsupported, attacked and dispersed them, and following up the panic which their flight occasioned, attacked and defeated the French army in detail; and to the events of that day alone are to be ascribed the subsequent retreat, disgrace, and ultimately the surrender of all the French army.

At

At all events, Buonaparte has by his uncommon enterprise already passed all those difficulties which marked the disgrace of his predecessor, and possessed himself of the capital of the country. It is therefore the feasibility of getting forward a part of his army from Cairo to the Red Sea, and the probable means he may rely on for securing transports to meet them there, that should form the subject of the concluding pages.

If we decline to applaud and admire that spirit of heroic enterprise which has hitherto marked the brilliant career of Buonaparte, because he is the enemy of our country; or appear insensible to that superior merit in others, which we are willing to magnify when applicable to ourselves; let us, if it be only in common justice to our country, avoid the fatal error of plunging into the gulf of delusion, by hoodwinking our senses in spite of undeniable facts, and influenced by a spirit of national pride or patriotism in refusing the tribute of merit wherever it may be deserved; let us, I say, at least recollect, that the most direful consequences

sequences have arisen from holding an enemy in contempt.

The Turkish government, it is true, has declared war against France, but it does not seem probable that an army from European Turkey can reach Egypt in any time to frustrate the plans of Buonaparte for pushing towards India (if that be his object); and it seems doubtful if such an army will ever be sent as may be able to counteract the designs of the French General; for the Turkish government, astounded by the daring projects of the French, will perhaps do little more than act on the defensive; and, at all events, appears to have sufficient employ for all its forces to oppose the Rebel Chief Paswan Oglou, and keep down the spirit of insurrection which, it is pretty well understood, he has excited in the Morea, &c. : and as to the force already in Egypt, I fancy it needs little argument to prove the inefficacy of any opposition that it can make to the French forces. Much has been said on the destruction with which the Arab Tribes will overwhelm the French

D

army

army in the desert space between Cairo and Suez; and the impossibility of obtaining water and provisions for an army in such a situation. The Arab Tribes, who derive their only mode of subsistence from the indiscriminate plunder of all those whom they are able to overcome, may doubtless annoy the march of the French army, and endeavour to plunder any thing they can lay hands on: but with all due deference to Mr. Irwin's local knowledge of the desert, and yielding my fullest belief of the hardy valour of the wandering Arabs, yet, as a soldier, I cannot concede the opinion, that the predatory warfare of such irregular bodies can ever make any serious impression upon the columns or squares (should it be necessary for the protection of baggage, &c. to march in the latter order) of a well-organized and victorious army, (protected by a few 12 pounders, supplied with grape,) whose extraordinary prowess has excited, if not the admiration and applause, at least the astonishment, of all Europe. If the united force of the different Arab Chiefs,

which

which a few years ago attacked, on its return from Mecca, a numerous caravan under Mouraud Bey, that had for its protection only 5,000 fighting men at the commencement of its march from Cairo, could not intercept its march, but were, on the contrary, completely defeated by that comparatively small force*, with what reason can it be expected that the projects of a French army, under a leader whose successes have endeared him to the soldiery, can be frustrated by any such opposition? Besides, we may allow that a spirit of animosity and jealousy, which frequently prevails between different Tribes of Arabs, will not be overlooked by the French General, whose ability for political intrigue his enemies even are disposed to admit; and that he will not fail to convert these party feuds to his own advantage, by fomenting the dissensions between them; and, by a promise of support and assistance, encourage them to league against each other, in which

* *Vide Savary's Letters.*

a spirit of revenge will make them eager to engage. Indeed, if the different accounts we receive could be considered as authentic, we might have spared any remark on this subject, as, it is said, such alliances have been already contracted by the French General.

Of the dissensions said to exist between the French General and his officers and men, from which strong hopes of his failure have been entertained, we are certainly at liberty to give credit to the reports until the result of his measures may contradict them ; but it may not be unreasonable, in the mean time, to consider on what probable grounds such discontent and spirit of mutiny can have arisen ; and whether it is not likely that the crafty policy of Buonaparte may have induced him to cause such accounts to be propagated, in order to lull us into ideas of security with respect to his future prowess ; in like manner as he is said to have caused false intelligence to be given respecting the destination of the fleet, previous to his landing, through the agency of pretended neutral vessels.

Long

Long inured to the hardships of war, and frequently under circumstances of extreme distress from the want of clothing, shoes, &c. &c. in the frigid climate of Europe, is it probable that these officers and soldiers should be dismayed or disgusted with any difficulties that might have presented themselves in Egypt, or that they ever expected to traverse distant and hostile regions without meeting with such casualties as invariably result from hostility and sickness? They were told, previous to embarkation, or at the time, that they were then about to enter on an undertaking more arduous than any they had hitherto achieved. Could they, therefore, be disappointed at not being invited to civic honours by the Beys; to the *magnificent distinction of wearing three tails instead of one*; or at not yet awhile being allowed to repose in the enchanting bowers of Rosetta, so luxuriously described by their countryman, Savary?

The next material point, then, for consideration is, the feasibility of commanding
water

water and provisions for the march. It would be presumptuous in me to attempt to point out the plan most likely to be adopted by one of the greatest Generals of the age for crossing a barren space of seventy miles; whether by establishing one or two depôts at intermediate places, and sending his troops in successive detachments of three or four divisions, so as that an extended line of march may be moving in daily succession, forming a line of support and communication, as it were, over a material part of the desert at the same time; or of moving in a collective body, to cover all his supplies in one concentrated point, which might be somewhat more dilatory, but the most secure mode; for in these measures he will of course be guided by the nature of circumstances, and the degree of opposition that he may have reason to expect. Leaving, therefore, to the propitious genius of Buonaparte the fighting part of the enterprise, I shall content myself with observing, on the score of supplies, that in addition to the quantity of water and food which, in cases
of

of emergency, every soldier is expected and considered to be capable of carrying, the possession of Grand Cairo and the adjacent country will certainly afford the means of collecting, either by purchase or by force, a very considerable number of camels, and such other animals or modes of conveyance as may be used in the country for the transportation of merchandize, &c. ; in aid of which, the circumstance of the period of assemblage at Grand Cairo of the annual caravan of pilgrims for Mecca having been precisely that at which Buonaparte advanced upon that capital, must doubtless have contributed greatly to the facility of collecting camels, horses, &c. Savary informs us, that no less a number than forty thousand people meet annually at Cairo, with several thousand camels, &c. preparatory to the grand pilgrimage to Mecca ; for which they generally set forward about the second or third week in August. By means of cattle so procured, joined to what each man may carry and hold in reserve for the concluding marches, sufficient water and food may surely

surely be conveyed; and perhaps another resource for water may be found, in digging pits in the sand five or six feet deep. I have seen water produced within the tropics, from apparently dry barren sand, at the distance of a foot and two feet from the surface.

The grand difficulty, then, on which the success of this enterprise seems to hinge, is the obtaining vessels in the Red Sea sufficient to transport the army that may be destined for India. Towards this we must all be aware, that the *late* fleet in the Mediterranean could not possibly have contributed; for all the genius of France united could not have conveyed that fleet over the desert of Arabia, and placed it at anchor at Suez or Coslier, to receive the French troops*. We must therefore be inclined to believe, that the French government who planned, and the great character to whom the execution of this gigantic enterprise is entrusted, could never, in the arrangement of such

* And indeed the French papers assert, that Buonaparte had ordered it to depart from the coasts of Egypt.

a momentous project, have acted with so little regard to common prudence and foresight, nay, to prominent, indispensable necessity, as not to have previously adopted some plausible measure, at least, for having transports in the Red Sea in readiness to receive the troops for India: and amongst the means of executing such a measure, perhaps the probability of the following may attach some degree of credit.

First, Not by engaging the Pachas and Beys of Egypt to summon their navy to Suez, but perhaps by the operations of a French naval commander in that country, who may have secured all the vessels in the Red Sea, either by purchase or by force*. With respect to the number and description of vessels that may be found there, and the adjacent gulfs of Sinde, &c. I shall not pretend to give any positive opinion; but only observe, that Colonel Capper's Journal contains an account of vessels of (I think)

* Admiral Sercy, with three or four heavy frigates, besides a variety of smaller vessels fitted out as privateers, is still busy in the eastern seas, which he has infested the greater part of the present war.

twelve hundred tons burden being used in the Red Sea to convey pilgrims from Suez to Jedda, the sea-port of Mecca ; and I have myself seen very fine ships, of five, six, and seven hundred tons burden, carrying on commerce in the Indian seas, under Arabian colours, and navigated and manned by natives of that country alone (I cannot take upon me to say to what particular ports they may have belonged). And although it may be objected to this statement, that vessels constructed like those noticed by Colonel Capper are not calculated for distant navigation in the more open seas, I think it would be rash to conclude, that vessels which can convey such a host of pilgrims the distance between Suez and Jedda (the most dangerous part of the navigation, perhaps, with respect to shoals, &c.) would be cheerfully embarked on by an army, animated with the prospect of a great and glorious achievement. There may doubtless be a risk attending it ; and is there any operation of war that is not attended with similar difficulties and dangers, in a greater or

lesser degree? Perhaps, further, agents of the French in that quarter (and there is scarcely a part of the world, I believe, where they have not agents of some sort) may have formed an alliance with, and secured the good offices of the Sherreif of Mecca, who has always evinced a rancorous spirit of jealousy and ill-will towards the English nation, excited, amongst other causes, by the attempts that have been made to establish commercial intercourse in that quarter*.

And secondly, it may be asked, where are the numerous ships which the French have captured, with successful impunity, in the Indian seas, during the present war? Where, but (for the most part, at least) in the hands of the French, ready, for aught we know, to co-operate in the very design in question.

Amongst a very numerous list of captures above alluded to, which I most sincerely lament, the following stand prominent

* *Vide* Capper's Journal.

in my recollection : the Princess Royal*, the Pigott, the Triton, (whose capture was a transaction of the most disgraceful nature that perhaps was ever recorded of Britons,) the Raymond and Woodcote, regular English East Indiamen ; the Fort William country ship, nearly as large as any of the former ; the Thomas, a large extra ship of last season ; the Kaunitz, a ship from Europe under Genoese colours, captured at the mouth of the Calcutta river ; a fine Arab ship, with specie on board ; and a new ship from Pegue, of about eight hundred tons, captured about the same time and place with the Kaunitz (the end of 1796 and beginning of 1797) ; besides many others of different descriptions, which I will not venture, from memory, to point out. The Triton was sold at the Mauritius, and said to be bought by an American, and under the colours of that nation she insultingly entered the port of Calcutta a few months after her capture. At all events, she is still

* This ship was probably retaken ; at least I think I have heard so.

trading in those seas ; and I should suppose the owners would have no more objection to be taken up at the Isle of France, to bring *freight* from the Red Sea, than from any other port in India.

Thirdly; a great number of foreign ships, especially Americans and Danes, resort constantly to the French islands, and Batavia, and carry thither articles of American and European produce, as well as convey articles of provision and commerce between those islands and India.

On an occasion like that under discussion, suppose the Governor of the French islands was to engage a number of these ships to bring *supplies from the Red Sea*, they possibly might not refuse; and if they did, the well-known want of ceremony practised by modern France will not, I think, allow us to hesitate as to the probability of their being *put in requisition*.

Mr. Irwin remarks that, supposing the Isle of France could furnish shipping enough, still the preparations would be known by our commanders; and further, that the
ports

ports of those islands have been blocked up for this year past. I sincerely wish this may prove to have been the case; though circumstances, I am inclined to think, do not warrant such a conclusion; for if it were so, how came La Seine frigate, lately so gallantly captured on the coast of France, to escape from Mauritius with troops on board? How could two other French frigates have escaped, which are said to have lately arrived in the European seas, as convoy to two Spanish vessels from Manilla? And that no such measure as the blockade of those ports has been successfully practised at any previous period of this war, we cannot remain in doubt, when it is evident, that of all the numerous prizes the French cruisers (frigates and privateers) have captured from us in India, and all of them been sent to the islands, we have seldom, if ever, heard of any of them being intercepted or retaken on their approaching the French ports; and their privateers have been fitted out thence, and returned to victual, &c. without an instance, in my recollection, of
any

any one being taken, either coming out or going in.

One action did happen, near Port Louis, between some of our ships that were cruising there, and two French frigates, which, however, both got safe into port; and it is much easier for vessels to dash out of a harbour than to get into it, if watched by ships in the Offing. Dark nights may completely cover the escape of many.

A squadron has certainly been often detached, as well from the Cape of Good Hope as from the fleet in India, to cruise off those islands; but I believe it is only during particular seasons of the year that they can remain there, on account of storms, &c.; and certain it is, we have seldom, if ever, heard of any material success attending their cruise.

That we have a large and gallant fleet in India I readily admit; but it is generally so dispersed, and variously employed in the numerous duties incident to fleets on that station, over an extensive track of ocean, that perhaps it would require at least three,
four,

four, or five months to collect it in force at the entrance of the Red Sea. When this might be effected, we should certainly have a superior naval force there to any (of which I have any information, at least, though it is said a squadron sailed thither from France in February last) the enemy could muster in that quarter. But if, in the mean time, the French should have possessed themselves of the island of Socotra, and the head-lands at the mouth of the Straits, and placed some heavy cannon there, it might go far to counterbalance the superiority we might have in the number of ships, and enable the enemy to contest the passage, even should our fleets be assembled to oppose them. This is certainly giving the French credit for wonderful exertion: but, as Mr. Irwin truly says, it is against seeming impossibilities that measures are to be taken at this awful crisis.

That French ships can and do move about those seas with impunity, and unobserved by our cruisers, is exemplified in a variety of occurrences at every period of the present war,

war, and particularly in the recent instance of cutting a vessel out of Madras Roads; and in the capture of two regular East India-men at anchor in Tillicherry Roads, which were carried off without any molestation. Why then, it may be asked, may not vessels steal up into the Red Sea, where we have no settlements, unnoticed, when they with impunity insult the coasts and harbours of our own immediate possessions?

Although Mr. Irwin has noticed a circumstance of disgust and ill-treatment shewn by Tippoo in a former war against a small French force, then serving with him, which a momentary paroxysm of disappointed ambition would naturally produce, occasioned by the French withdrawing themselves from the service in which they were jointly engaged, and at a moment, perhaps, when Tippoo had good reason to believe a few days perseverance in their united exertions might have been productive of victory; yet I think there is very ample testimony of the disposition of Tippoo to form an alliance with France,

F

and

and of his unceasing endeavours to obtain the assistance of that nation to enable him to destroy the British empire in the East. If the positive and evident state of things did not convince us, that the object of Buonaparte's expedition to the East must have for its basis a concerted plan and alliance with Tippoo Sultaun, the following facts must put it beyond all doubt: 1st, His having sent commissioners to France, subsequent to the act of contempt noticed by Mr. Irwin, and of his having prepared for war, and actually commenced it in a most unprovoked manner against the English, at a time when, as the event proved, he was not capable of opposing us with any plausible hopes of success by himself, and which I firmly believe he would never have engaged in, but for the assistance he expected from France, and which nothing, perhaps, prevented, but the Revolution that, unfortunately for Tippoo's views, broke out just at the time in France, and engaged all the attention of that nation. 2dly, The deputation which Tippoo lately

sent to the Isle of France, the proclamation made by those deputies, and the counter-declaration of the Governor of that island ; in which, after inviting every thing in the shape of a Frenchman to rally round his standard in Myfore, it is expressly declared, that the avowed object of the parties is to strike a decisive blow at the British power on the coast of Coromandel.

Fired by a spirit of insatiable revenge for his late disgraces, and the ardour of religious enthusiasm and hatred against the English nation in particular, depend upon it, my Countrymen, that the Sultaun of Myfore will forego every other consideration of future consequences in the desire of gratifying these passions. He still possesses an extensive and fertile dominion, riches to a large amount, a hardy and well-trained army ; and his late defeat, and the privation of half of his possessions, has only served to animate his indignant feelings, and increase in him that spirit of animosity towards the English which he had been used to cherish from his youth.

With respect to the intentions of Buonaparte, to "act as a Greek mercenary," or otherwise, we must leave to time to develop. Perhaps it may not be a part of his plan to go himself to India, and certainly not to transport thither, even if he had the means, all the troops that he commands; that would be quite superfluous to the objects of the coalition; it may be his plan to establish himself in Egypt, with a view to form a link of communication between Mysore and France, and send forward only a division of his army to India; 6 or 8000 men would be quite sufficient to encourage Tippoo to take the field against the English; the contest would be a tough one, and probably the issue doubtful.

Whilst writing, I hear it seriously asserted, that rafts of a construction to carry from 3 to 500 men are actually provided to carry the French troops down the Red Sea, and although I am not inclined to yield implicit belief to the feasibility of such an undertaking, it may perhaps be but reasonable,

able, after all the enterprising spirit that has been so successfully exerted by the French nation, to give some credit to the attempt. Perhaps these may be intended to answer the purpose of conveying the troops as far as Jedda and Mocha, where the transports might be assembled, especially at the latter port, in spite of the monsoon that may prevail further northward.

The pilgrim vessels would at least answer this purpose, even though they might not venture on them beyond the Red Sea.

The following quotation from Savary shews the feasibility of such a measure at *this time* of the year. "About September
" and October ships arrive at Jedda with
" pilgrims and articles of traffic for the
" grand fair held at Mekka."

If Buonaparte has rested the hopes of success on the celerity of his motions, that division of his army which we have heard of being detached to Suez, is possibly at this moment embarked on the Red Sea; and as the progress of ships and vessels

sels at sea, dependent on such a variety of chances and circumstances as it is, baffles all calculation, there seems no positive argument against hazarding an opinion, that they may even have cleared the Straits which bound that sea.

It is probable, however, that this may not yet have happened, and there is a measure which, if it has been adopted, may defeat the enemy's plans (and which I have no doubt but the vigilance of government has anticipated, if they were not led to believe that the supposed expedition to India was too romantic and absurd to deserve notice): and that is, if the sloop of war which sailed from Spithead with dispatches in June or July last was destined for the Cape of Good Hope, with orders to the Admiral on that station to detach a division of his fleet to the mouth of the Red Sea direct, and another division to blockade, in spite of the elements, the ports of the French islands; and allowing (which we sincerely hope was the case) that the
season

season of the year was favourable for the former division to have pushed through the Mosambique channel, as well for the sake of expedition as for the chance of falling in with French ships that might be coasting along the African shores towards the grand point of contact, they would have a fair chance of being first at the goal; and this daring enterprise may be completely frustrated at the Straits of Bab-ul-Mandeb*; and by the annihilation of the French army in that gulf, verify to modern France the prophetic designation which it received from the ancient Arabians.

Without trespassing further on the patience of my readers, I shall hasten to conclude.

Let the probability and feasibility of the different arguments for and against the accomplishment of Buonaparte's supposed designs against India be impartially weighed; and to the former let us add, the considerations which arise out of the subject of the

* Bab-ul-Mandeb, or, the Gate of Mourning; so named, from the number of shipwrecks which the dangerous navigation occasioned.

uninterrupted success which has hitherto marked the career of this Hero of France, and the probable continuance of that success, which is fairly imputable to an army headed by a General, who by his genius, abilities, and address, has gained their unbounded attachment and confidence.

That the determined resolution mutually inspired by past achievements must keep alive such a spirit of military enterprise and ardour, joined to the prospect of the glorious prize for which they are contending; as will in no small degree contribute to the accomplishment of every undertaking, and enable them to surmount difficulties and hardships, which troops under other circumstances, of a less favoured commander, or led on only by a frigid sense of professional duty or mercenary necessity, might shrink from with dismay; whence I think we shall certainly see reason to apprehend that there is no undertaking, however arduous and apparently impracticable, that may not be successfully combated by such enthusiasm.

I admit

I admit this to be an enterprise of no common accomplishment; and that in proportion to the magnitude of the object, must be the dangers attending its execution. Many trying difficulties and obstacles are perhaps to be overcome. The crossing the desert will prove a "tug of war," and the passage to India may prove disastrous; but all military operations are liable to such casualties, and the hopes of ultimate success furnishes sufficient fortitude to bear up against them without despair.

In the foregoing pages I have not reckoned on the assistance the French will derive in India from a squadron of six sail of the line, &c. said to be in those seas under Richery, because I possess no positive knowledge of such a squadron being there; at the same time I believe the public have no positive assurance to the contrary; or, on the other hand, of the probable co-operation of Zemaun Shah, King of Cabul, with Tippoo, who, it is said in the Persian newspapers from India of so late a date as June, had ambassadors at the court of
 Cabul.

Cabul. The probability of such an alliance has been long foreseen; for both these Princes being zealous supporters of the Mahomedan faith, may be equally jealous of the English power; and although their dominions are separated by a wide extent of intermediate states and countries, they are nevertheless eligible to act in concert against our possessions, by making an impression on the frontiers adjacent to their respective countries at a concerted point of time, so as completely to prevent any succour being sent from one Presidency to another.

If, prompted by that successful genius which has hitherto conducted this Chief to glory, Buonaparte should be induced to hazard the measure of detaching a division of his army, supported possibly by bodies of horse that may be encouraged to join him from a desire of plunder, a spirit of enterprise, or as mercenaries, to march through Syria, Persia, and, skirting the borders of the Caspian Sea, enter Afghaunistan from the N. W. in consequence of a concerted

certed plan (which seems probable) between Tippoo and Zemaun Shah, the co-operation and assistance, with respect to supplies, &c. of the latter Chief, whose frontiers extend in that quarter near to the Caspian, would so far contribute to the facility of the attempt, as, in my opinion, to render it highly practicable. Of the result of such a junction I shall decline to speak.

The late partial reformation in the government of Oude may, from not having been more general and complete, contribute to encourage the threatened irruption of Zemaun Shah from the North; and the latest Persian newspapers serve to confirm this idea. The people in power in Oude, and especially Almas Ally Khan, who was so emphatically pitied in the House of Commons, possesses, by his great riches and numerous army, more influence perhaps than the Nawaub himself; and the former, naturally jealous of the growing influence of the English, is said to be indignant at the change; and by augmenting his army,

is supposed to give encouragement to the views of the northern invader.—A much smaller force than that now kept up in Oude, would, under British arrangement, be far more efficient for the defence of that frontier, and would afford the means of disbanding the host of forces now kept up in that country, at the same time that it would be removing the internal means of our own destruction, should the invasion of a foreign power encourage the discontented to avow their hostile inclinations.

I declare myself to be by no means influenced by a spirit of despondency, neither do I in the smallest degree desire to excite a false alarm; there is certainly an appearance of an extensive confederacy against the British possessions in Asia, and to obviate the effect, we have only to be prepared to meet it, by the adoption of such permanent arrangements there, as to obviate the necessity of resorting to temporary expedients, which, in a government so far removed from the mother country, may
fatally

fatally prove too late, and not leave, what is allowed to be the "Brightest Jewel in the British Crown," to that fate on which one of its greatest rulers has emphatically expressed its existence to be suspended, "BY A THREAD SO FINE, THAT THE TOUCH OF CHANCE MIGHT BREAK, OR THE BREATH OF OPINION DISSOLVE IT*."

* *Vide Hastings's State of India.*

THE END.

